



AMERICAN FRONTIER CULTURE FOUNDATION

Bringing the Past to Life

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Building the West African Farm

After a winter and spring of planning and organizing, construction on the Museum's West African Farm began on June 9, 2009, under the direction of Dr. Stanislaus Maduawuchi Ogbonna, Dr. JAK Njoku, and Curator of Historic Buildings, Ray Wright. Dr. Ogbonna and Dr. Njoku provided the traditional Igbo building experience and knowledge, and Ray brought his skill and an eagerness to learn. To insure that none of this knowledge and skill was lost, fifteen student athletes from local high schools and a few college students were hired as the project labor force.

Although it was an unusually wet summer, work proceeded with minimal delay. Unprecedented amounts of mud was puddled and thrown to form the foundations and walls of the buildings, and they quickly began to rise from the ground and take definite form. Within one month of starting work, one building was complete and under roof, and the walls of a second were rising rapidly. By Labor Day weekend, two buildings were under roof, the walls of a third were nearing completion,



Working hard to get the roof up before winter starts.

and the walls of a fourth were just above ground. Work continued deep in to fall, and by mid-November all four of the buildings were under roof, and preparations for winter underway.

The plan for 2010 is to begin work on the West African Farm earlier in the spring with an assessment of the impact of winter weather on the structures. Necessary repairs will be completed and the finishing touches will be applied to the buildings. The main construction work for the spring will be the enclosing

compound wall. The area surrounding the West African Farm will also receive some intensive landscaping work to transform it into a small piece of Africa. The official opening of the exhibit and the events marking it are planned for mid-to-late summer 2010.

A word must also be said about the incredible interest and support the West African Farm has received from the Igbo community in the United States. Beginning on the first day of construction and continuing

Building W. African Farm continued on page 2

United States Citizenship and Immigration Service: Different Name, Same Ideals

On Monday September 21, the Museum hosted its tenth annual Naturalization Ceremony, at which nearly one hundred new citizens took their oath of citizenship. The ceremony took place in Lee Cochran pavilion and was presided over by Judge James G. Welsh, of the United States Western District Court. The colors were presented and retired by the Fishburne Military Academy Color Guard, and nearly two hundred local school children attended.



Senator Jim Webb addressing the new citizens.

United States Senator, James Webb, a writer and historian, authored a book on his own Scots-Irish family heritage and offered words of welcome and advice to the new citizens in his keynote address. He gave examples of his own family's historical and recent experience in becoming American citizens, and reminded the new citizens of the vast opportunities available to them. He complimented them on their hard work in arriving at the point of taking the oath of

U.S. Citizenship continued on page 2

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In Loving Memory of Bill Smith and Jane Jones

The Frontier Culture Museum and American Frontier Culture Foundation mourn the passing of Mr. Bill Smith, one of the newest members of the Foundation's Board of Directors. Bill spent his short time with the Museum as an active volunteer and dedicated member of our community.

The Museum and Foundation also mourn the passing of a former Director, Mrs. Jane Jones of Blacksburg. Jane served on the Board of Directors from 2000 to 2004. She translated German documents for the Museum and was an award-winning weaver. Our sincerest sympathies are with both families.

A Night to Recognize our Volunteers

Museum Staff and Board members hosted a Volunteer Recognition Picnic in the Lee S. Cochran Pavilion on September 8. The festive event drew over 50 volunteers and featured an old fashioned supper of fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, green beans, and sides. A number of volunteers answered the challenge to bring a favorite homemade pie to share and we supplied the ice cream. Volunteer coordinators Lydia Volskis, Peggy Sheets and Sarah McCumsey thanked the volunteers for their time, cheerful spirit and dedication to the Museum, while Executive Director John Avoli praised the volunteers' "pioneer spirit" in meeting all challenges and needs throughout the year. We are proud that our volunteers contributed more than 4000 hours to the Museum in the 2009 fiscal year.

Volunteer opportunities vary at the Museum and include tram driving, greeting guests on farmsites, special events support, fudge-making, landscaping and gardening, research and curatorial assistance, clerical and many other specialized tasks. As a state agency with limited resources, the Museum especially values the contributions of our volunteers.

We also announced the new 'Volunteer of the Quarter' and 'Volunteer of the Year'



The staff served dinner to our volunteers as an extra thank you for all their hard work.

programs, in which one volunteer is selected to receive the prize each quarter, with the four quarterly winners eligible for the yearly award. Each quarterly winner receives a gift certificate to the restaurant of their choice, and the Volunteer of the Year winner receives a greater gift. This program, as well as other volunteer support initiatives are generously supported by private donors and the American Frontier Culture Foundation.

At the end of the evening, volunteers placed their names in a hat for prize drawings which yielded music CD's, special baked goods, theater tickets and table decorations. A good time was had by all! If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lydia Volskis in the Museum office.

W. African Farm continued from page 1

throughout the summer the participation of Igbo volunteers was constant and enthusiastic. The culmination came over the Labor Day weekend when nearly 80 volunteers in teams from Chicago, Nashville, Kentucky, Washington, D.C., and New Jersey devoted their holiday weekend to puddling and throwing mud. In all, over 200 volunteers worked on the West African Farm in 2009, and the Museum owes thanks to them all.

U.S. Citizenship continued from page 1

citizenship, and also reminded them of the responsibilities which come with citizenship such as voting, being responsive to fellow citizen's needs and being active in community life. Senator Webb's remarks were received with enthusiasm, and after the ceremony attendees were treated to refreshments by several local civic groups. The Frontier Culture Museum is proud to host such an important event year after year.

Recreating the Past at the 1820s American Farm

For the past several years, the Museum has been acquiring furnishings for the Bowman House at the 1820s American Farm exhibit. In obtaining these furnishings, including furniture, cook-ware, textile-working tools and equipment, bedding, and other house wares, we wish to present a Virginia German farm house as it might have looked in the 1820s, as well as providing our costumed staff with everything needed to carry out programs.

In order to determine what should be in the house, we spent several years researching the material culture of early American farmsteads. The most important resource identified was probate inventories, appraisals of the personal property owned by deceased individuals at the time of their death. Probate inventories included livestock, crops,

farm implements, tools, and household furnishings. In addition to a probate inventory for John Bowman, Sr. dated 1816, a sample of thirty-five inventories dating between 1825 and 1832 was also examined. These inventories provided a sense of the types of furnishings and tools typical of Valley farmsteads in the 1820s. Examples of these items were identified in published works, the Museum's collection, and other private and museum collections so we could reproduce them for the Bowman House.

We obtained many reproductions from outside artisans and vendors, but the Museum is fortunate to have staff, volunteers, and donors who are able to provide or make reproductions. In particular, volunteer woodworkers George

Lott and Ken Knorr made much of the furniture for the Bowman House, including tables, a chest of drawers, benches, a bedstead, and a set of shelves. The lumber used in their projects was contributed by Tom Sheets of Blue Ridge Lumber and Earl and Janet Downs, among others. Most recently, Mr. Lott made a case for a tall clock which will be mated with a clock generously donated Mr. Dean Sarnelle, owner of Once Upon a Time clock shop in Staunton.

In the coming year, a few more items will be added to the Bowman House to complete its furnishings. A glass-front corner cupboard will grace the parlor, complete with copies of Staffordshire dinner plates and teaware popular with American consumers of all classes in the early 1800s.

Find us online!

The American Frontier Culture Foundation is online at www.frontiermuseum.org/support. At this website you can find out more about how to support the Foundation and Museum as well as view past newsletters and learn more about the Foundation.

The Frontier Culture Museum is on Facebook and Flickr! Become a fan of the Museum as well as check out photos from our latest events! You can also find information about upcoming events and programs at the Museum at www.frontiermuseum.org.

Oktoberfest 2009

Crowds at Oktoberfest 2009 enjoyed musical entertainment the Shippensburg Blaskapelle, a traditional German dance and polka band and the Stonewall Brigade Band and Bill McElroy. These groups set the mood for a lively festival with abundant dancing and merriment. We were treated to weather that was sunny and warm and brought many visitors, old and young.

Festival-goers enjoyed food and drinks as well as great music that ran past the designated 8 o'clock closing time. Everyone was having too much fun for the party to stop! Games and activities for children and adults were held in the field between the German Farm and the Scotch-Irish Farm. These included barrel-rolling, a sauerkraut race, stories and pony rides. The Museum's German Farm, a 17th century timber-frame farmhouse and barn complex, was relocated to the Museum from its original location in

Hordt, a small village in the Rhineland-Pfalz, a region of modern Germany located close to the French border, along the Rhine River.

We are extremely grateful for the support provided by our Oktoberfest sponsors: Blue Ridge Beverage Co. and Coca-Cola Enterprises. Without these sponsors, events like Oktoberfest would not be possible.

Along with the normal festival crowd, Oktoberfest was supplemented by a weekend visit from the Beaver Creek Long Knives, a Revolutionary War reenactment group. The group set up camp in the front yard of the 1850s American Farm as well as putting up sutler tents (civilian merchants who sold provisions in the field) between the Bowman House and the under-reconstruction Shuler Schoolhouse. Armed

with tomahawks, long rifles, and knives, the Beaver Creek Long Knives helped keep the American Farms secure during their stay. One of our regular volunteers and member of the group, George Lott, demonstrated flint knapping for visitors. This addition to the regular Oktoberfest weekend rounded out the festivities wonderfully.



Oktoberfest visitors enjoyed the German sounds of the Shippensburg Blaskapelle.

FRONTIER ANNUAL FUND

Contributions to the Frontier Annual Fund support many significant investments in the future of the Frontier Culture Museum. We extend our most heartfelt appreciation to the individuals, businesses, and foundations who helped us accomplish so much during our 2008-2009 fiscal year.

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Pewter Tankard, mid-20th century, on display in
the English Farm parlor.

Gift of Mr. John Clayton
Dress, circa 1865

Gift of Mrs. Betty Gatewood
Spiers panel plane, circa 1875

Gift of Mr. George Lott
Igbo Maiden Spirit Mask, 19th or 20th
century, on display in the Visitor
Center exhibit gallery.

Gift of Mr. Jim Putbrese
Portrait, possibly of John Barger IV,
third quarter of the 19th century
Gift of Ms. Naomi (Barger) Shamblin Toler

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While we strive to make certain that all gifts are acknowledged accurately, it is possible that errors have been made in the foregoing list. If any are discovered, please accept our sincere apologies and notify us so that we can make appropriate changes.

10th Annual Heritage Golf Classic Right on Par

The 2009 Heritage Golf Classic was held on Thursday, September 24 at the Country Club of Staunton. The annual challenge between the Scots Team and the Irish Team kicked off with a bagpipe performance and two rousing pep talks from the team captains, Mr. Frank Summers for the Scots Team and Mr. Frank McDonough for the Irish Team. The weather exemplified a Virginia summer, hot and humid, but players did not allow that to oppress their spirits or golf game.

At the end of the day, golfers and their guests enjoyed a fun and relaxing reception with dinner at the Lee S. Cochran Pavilion. While waiting for the announcement of the

winning team, the group listened to the VMI Pipe Band, a staple at this event. In the end, the Scots Team won, making this the third win in a row over the Irish Team.

The tournament enjoys a wonderful field of sponsors each year and this year was no exception. The 2009 sponsors are: Blue Ridge Beverage Co./MillerCoors LLC, Coca-Cola Enterprises, Comcast Spotlight, BB&T Scott and Stringfellow and BB&T Barger Insurance, Blue Ridge Appraisals, Blue Ridge Lumber Co., Community Bank, Dave and Gail Brown, Dominion, Mr. Bud Flanders,

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For more information concerning the tournament or to inquire about next year's tournament, please contact Judith Andrews at 540-332-7850 or judith.andrews@fcmv.virginia.gov.

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Lee S. Cochran Pavilion

Guests enjoy a panoramic view overlooking the Frontier Culture Museum and the Valley beyond; setting the stage for a truly memorable event.

Octagonal Barn

The Octagonal Barn offers the unique barn setting with modern conveniences—air conditioning, kitchen facilities and restrooms. This setting has been a popular site for smaller weddings and rehearsal dinners.

For more information, or to reserve Museum facilities for your next event, please contact Gwen Kite at 540-332-7850, ext. 129 or gwen.kite@fcmv.virginia.gov.

Adding a Schoolhouse to the American Farms

The reconstruction of the Schuler Schoolhouse began at the Museum in March 2009 with the selection of a site to the north of the Bowman House, and across the road from the 1850s American Farm. Completion of the footers and foundation followed quickly, and the long process of hand hewing replacement logs got underway. Over several weeks, Curator of Historic Buildings, Ray Wright; Historic Carpenter, Steve Broyles; their helper, Pete Stallings; and Museum volunteers, Doug MacTavish and Dick Spencer spent their days hewing more than 28 oak logs, which were donated to the Museum by Trustee, Tom Sheets, of Blue Ridge Lumber.

By mid-May, the careful process of notching and fitting the replacement and original logs was the main order of business,

and the Schuler Schoolhouse began to rise on its new site. Over the course of the summer and into the fall work continued on the structure with additional help from Museum Facilities and Grounds Supervisor, Cliff Edwards. Curator of Collections, David Puckett, also developed a furnishing plan for the schoolhouse, and volunteers, George Lott and Ken Knorr, produced several fine benches and a schoolmaster's desk for placement in the completed building.

As of mid-November, the Schuler Schoolhouse is under roof and the finishing touches are being applied. Restoration of its four windows is in progress, along with completion of a range of interesting interior and exterior details. Tentative plans are in preparation for an official dedication and grand opening ceremony in the spring 2010.

This new exhibit promises to inspire a variety of new programs for the Museum, and exciting new learning opportunities for visitors of all ages.



Volunteers and staff have worked hard to complete the Schuler Schoolhouse reconstruction.

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Creepy Tales

On October 29-31, evening guests enjoyed a series of Creepy Tales on the European farms. Guides led small groups around the English, Irish, and German farms to enjoy plays based on old ghost and folk tales. Our cast of 26 actors portrayed an English farm family tormented by oak trees, and Irish farm with zombies and a headless horseman and a German witch trial with a surprise ending. Creepy tales are one of the most enjoyable programs we have at the Museum. Thank you to all our volunteers and everyone who enjoyed a Creepy Tale or two!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Lantern Tours

Lantern Tours are returning to the Frontier Culture Museum for Christmas 2009. The staff has been working behind the scenes to prepare for the best Lantern Tours ever. Lantern Tours are December 18-23, 6:00 – 8:30 each half hour. The tours will visit the Old World farms and end in the Dairy Barn Lecture Hall for music and refreshments. Tickets are by reservation and go on sale November 30th. Our Lantern Tours would not be possible without the many museum volunteers.

Winter Lecture Series

Please join us this February and March for our upcoming Winter Lecture Series. The dates include: February 16, February 23, March 2, and March 9. Each lecture will feature a different guest speaker and run from 7pm-9pm in the Dairy Barn Lecture Hall. These events are open to everyone and no tickets are required. Please check the Frontier Culture Museum online calendar for speaker information as the dates draw near.



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